

REMARKS

Claims 1-7, all the claims pending in the application, stand rejected. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 4 in order to better define the subject matter that is considered to be the invention. Applicants also have added new claims 8 and 9 in order to obtain the scope of protection to which Applicants believe they are entitled, in view of the limited teachings of the prior art.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. This rejection is traversed for at least the following reasons.

The Examiner comments that claims 1-3 includes language “for use in a game machine” and observes that “since the claim does not set forth any steps involved in the method/process, it is unclear what method/process Applicant is intending to encompass.” The basis for this comment is not understood and, if it is to be maintained, clarification is requested. First, the claim is expressly directed to a “display device.” Second, in the transitional phrase of the claim, states “the display device comprising:”, followed by a recitation of several structural limitations. Clearly, the claim is not directed to a method, but is directed to structure. Thus, this rejection should be withdrawn for the foregoing reasons and those added reasons given subsequently.

Claim Rejection - 35 U.S.C. § 101

Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 “because the claimed recitation of a use, without setting forth any steps involved in the process, results in an improper definition of a process”. This rejection is traversed for at least the following reasons.

It would appear that the Examiner’s concern is with the phrase “for use in a game machine.” It also appears that he concludes that a statement of such use necessarily and exclusively relates to a process. Clearly, this is not the case as the rejected claims are intended to cover a structure that is used with a game machine. In other words, the game machine is intended to provide a definition of the environment within which the display device is used. The

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claim is not directed to a game machine nor is it directed to a combination of the display device with elements of the game machine, but is limited to a display device.

Applicant has rephrased the claim to state that the display device is “operable with a game machine.”

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102/103

Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Walker et al (6,110,041) or in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) [*sic* 103(a)] as obvious over Walker ‘041. This rejection is traversed for at least the following reasons.

As a preliminary matter, the Examiner points to the language in claim 1 “for use in a game machine...variable display device” and observes that this is language of a preamble that fails to breathe life and meaning into the claims. In particular, the Examiner observes that the claim body does not depend on the preamble for completeness such that the structural limitations stand alone, citing *In re Hirao*. Applicants respectfully traverse this conclusion and observe that the purpose of the preamble is to define the nature of the environment within which the display device is operative and meaningful. While the body of the claim does not refer to the content of the preamble, particularly the elements of the game machine, it nonetheless breathes life and meaning into the claimed subject matter.

In order to further clarify the invention, Applicants have added language to the body of claim 1 that ties the game machine to the elements of the display device recited in the body of the claim. In particular, Applicants have described the game machine as having “a theme” and have described the indicator as “adapted to display information related at least to the theme of the game machine.” The existence of such “theme” in game machines is described with regard to the display device at pages 24-31, particularly at page 27. Since the Examiner admits that Walker does not teach a game that provides a bonus, this amendment would avoid further argument with regard to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

With regard to the rejection under § 103, the Examiner looks to the Applicants’ admitted prior art and a teaching at pages 1-3 of a slot machine having a plurality of reels where the reels are stopped by way of actuation of stop buttons and the slot machine provides a bonus. The

Examiner then asserts that Walker '041 teaches the remaining content of claim 1, namely a display comprising an indicator, a recording medium having a plurality of display content information items, a display content selector which selects display contents...by manual operation, and a display control device. Applicants respectfully submit that this structure is not taught in Walker '041.

The Invention

As recited in the Background of the Invention at pages 3 and 4 of the present specification, game machines include an indicator that display contents matching a predetermined theme, and provide certain display content to players. It is noted that the contents may not match a player's preferences for a game machine theme. Moreover, because of the desire to use identical indicators in the manufacture of low-cost game machines, the game machines are preprogrammed to display certain content on the indicator. Thus, there is no commonality of operations during a manufacturing process of machines having different themes.

The invention solves this problem by providing a display unit, as illustrated in Fig. 1 and disclosed beginning page 24, where an LCD 21 is operative in response to a display controller 40, which includes CPU 41, RAM 42, program ROM 43, image data ROM 44 and image display LSI 45 to provide the contents of a theme for display on the LCD 21. An example is given of a professional baseball theme, where the game player may operate a button 25 to control a variable display on the LCD 21. In the example, given the baseball theme, a player may select displays related to any of a plurality of baseball teams by operating button 25. A change over switch 23 has a plurality of settings which may provide access to different themes, or even preclude actuation of the changeover button 25. In the example, three settings are provided as shown in Fig. 3. and described at page 27.

In framing the rejection, the Examiner looks to the disclosure in Walker '041 of a slot machine 120 that, alone or in connection with the network, is operative to control reels (332-336), display information in video display area 346 and provide additional display information in display 362 that forms a part of a tracking device 360. As disclosed at col. 6, line 39, the display 362 may be a touch screen display for receiving signals from a player concerning his selection of

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certain options. Presumably, instructions for operating the touch screen are provided on the display. In operation, a player preference database is accessed under control of CPU 310 and preferences of a player are entered using preference selection buttons 370. The Examiner reads this combination on the limitations contained in the body of the claim. However, as subsequently explained, the claims as amended, clearly distinguish over Walker.

Claims 1-2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Walker et al (6,186,893) or in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker et al (6,186,893). Again, the Examiner notes that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) is based on the assumption that the preamble does not breathe life and meaning into the claim. Thus, on the basis of Applicants' amendment to claim 1, this rejection is overcome.

With regard to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), the Examiner looks to the Applicant's background admission of prior art as a basis for demonstrating that slot machines with a bonus are well known in the art.

With regard to the content of the body of the rejected claims, the Examiner points to features of Fig. 6 of Walker '893 for a teaching of a preference-based slot machine 14, having the corresponding interactive display module 22 with a display 54, card reader 55 and keyboard 56. Again, Applicants have amended the claim to recite an environment or theme for the game machine as a basis for distinguishing over Walker '893.

It should be noted that the amendment to the claims clearly distinguish from a theme that may appear in the display screen of the interactive display module 22. Specifically, the amendment defines the indicator as providing an overall theme environment for the gambling machine and that at least some of the information items taken from the recording medium relate to the selectable theme.

Claims 4-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker et al '041 in view of Okada (4,508,345). Further, claims 4-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker et al '893 in view of Okada (4,508,345). These rejections are traversed for at least the following reasons.

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These claims are directed to a game machine. The claims incorporate the features of a game machine in the body of the claims, together with the features of the display device as recited in claims 1-3. Further, dependent claims 6 and 7 specify that the contents selector is located at a position where a player can actuate the display content selector (claim 6) or as a user operation prevention device (claim 7).

The Examiner cites Okada for his teaching of a slot machine with the bonus feature having a skilled stop teaching variable display stop device. Okada is not cited for purposes related to the display of a theme environment. Thus, Okada et al would not remedy the deficiencies of either Walker '041 or Walker '893, as previously discussed. On this basis, Applicants respectfully submit that all of these claims are allowable since amendments corresponding to those made in claim 1 have been made to claim 4.

New Claims

Applicants have added new claims 8 and 9, which are directed to a device for a slot machine that has a two-screen display and a setting provider that can select a setting object (selected pay line or bet tokens) for a first screen and set a number of setting objects for a second screen, responsive to a determinant for entry of the selection or setting. Claim 9 further specifies that the display device displays an error code in case of a failure.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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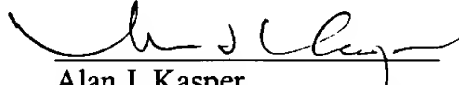
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